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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of an 18-month workplace education program at 2 health care sites in Cambridge, Massachusetts, showed that the curriculum designed could be adapted for other workplace education programs. The workplace education program was designed to help improve the language skills of employees at Neville Manor and at the Cambridge Hospital. Of 35 people tested for the program, most fell into higher skill levels of adult basic education. Programs designed for each site included specific workplace language. Those students who needed classes in English as a Second Language were easily served. Those who had higher skills were helped to develop them further, leading to increased job performance as students became active leaders. Cooperation and communication among people of widely different backgrounds increased, and greater self-esteem was widely reported. (Lesson plans are included in the report.) (KC)

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Department of Education

Beyond Reading and Writing: A Workplace Curriculum Report

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National Workplace Literacy Program (Round III)
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CE063236

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This curriculum report is based on an 18-month workplace education program at two health care sites in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In looking back over the progression of instruction at both sites, we discovered the seed for a generic workplace curriculum designed to address the educational and professional needs of ASE students. In teaching the classes, we also found that as students developed better skills, their contributions to the workplace increased both in scope and in quantity.

The report is divided into five sections:

1) General introduction: a brief statement introducing the programs at the two sites;
2) Neville Manor Nursing Home: a description of the curriculum development process at Neville Manor;
3) The Cambridge Hospital: a description of the curriculum development process at The Cambridge Hospital;
4) Lessons from Neville Manor and The Cambridge Hospital;
5) Concluding statement.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The Workplace Education Program at Neville Manor was initiated because supervisors felt that many employees were deficient in language skills. Supervisors polled at The Cambridge Hospital (TCH) also reported that many of their employees could improve job performance if they improved their communications and mathematics skills.

Twenty-five people were tested at Neville Manor and ten at TCH. At both sites we were surprised at the high skill level of those we tested. The Neville Manor employees fell primarily into two groups: low intermediate ESL (SPL 5) and intermediate ABE/ASE (reading level 6.0-10.0). The ABE students were a mixture of native and non-native English speakers. A large number of these students were interested in getting a high school diploma. Many wanted to attend nursing school, college, or other technical schools. At TCH, employees were mainly high level ABE non-native English speakers, although native speakers would join them later. Most high skill employees at TCH, by contrast to Neville Manor, already had a high school diploma. They wanted to participate in the program to improve their writing skills and grammar in order to boost their job performance.

NEVILLE MANOR NURSING HOME:

For the ESL students at Neville Manor, curriculum design was straight-forward. There is a considerable body of workplace ESL curriculum ideas and materials available. We designed a program which included specific workplace ESL, general workplace ESL, and life skills ESL.

Designing a workplace curriculum for the high skills group at Neville was more difficult. These employees had no educational

deficiencies which related to their jobs. They spoke English clearly and correctly, and their reading and writing skills were more than adequate to meet the demands of their jobs. Our grant required that we design workplace related curriculum, so the immediate question was how to reconcile the students' apparent lack of workplace needs with the grant requirements. Were there skills these students needed which could improve their performance at work, given that their performance was already deemed excellent?

The stated goal of the Administrator of the nursing home for high skill level employees was that the education program provide an additional benefit for them. He hoped employees could improve their education levels, thereby improving their morale at work and helping them to achieve long range career objectives. He had no other requirements or expectations from this part of the program. He decided that the nursing home would fund an external diploma program to supplement the workplace education program so that students in the classes could also get high school diplomas.

The Education Program goals, as stated in the federal grant proposal, were to improve workers' job performance through both general and site-specific workplace curricula. We expected students to improve their English language, reading, writing, and /or math skills and to increase their level of self-confidence. We projected improved on-the-job relations as a result of enhanced literacy skills. We expected also to provide participants with information and preparation to continue their education or training.

As we began the program, it appeared that the classes would simply help employees further their education, since they weren't deficient in job performance. There were no opportunities for advancement within the nursing home; therefore, success in the classes might well mean that a student would be preparing him/herself to leave the nursing home for a better job at another workplace.

As the program progressed, however, it became evident that the classes did benefit the nursing home as a whole in more ways than originally conceived. Students began to develop skills which enlarged the dimensions of their participation in and contribution to the workplace. Several of the students became active leaders in new initiatives at Neville Manor.

Neville Manor is in the embryonic stages of introducing Total Quality Management to the staff. The Administrator and the Quality Improvement Director have been gradually introducing the TQM concept. Students from the education program have been active in several steps taken so far. Two class members served on the search committee for a new Director of Nursing. Two others were among five nursing assistants who volunteered to participate in the first full-day TQM training for Neville Manor staff. In addition to being involved in the TQM process, students from the education program have participated in other initiatives; for example, two

students from the classes trained with the Director of Staff Development to be surveyors of patient care for the nursing home. This was part of a new program to help Neville employees prepare for state inspection visits.

Another benefit to the nursing home, this one reported by members of the class, was increased communication, cooperation, and friendship among individuals from different racial/cultural/language backgrounds. This came about naturally from participation in the classes because students work in groups with members of other cultures. They help each other and support each other in the class, and students report that this cooperation generalizes to the floors of the nursing home.

Probably the most universally reported outcome of workplace programs is increased self-esteem of students. Our program was no exception. Paired with improved school skills was increased self-confidence and self-esteem. There appeared to also be a natural inclination to become more actively involved in all aspects of the job. Students joined committees, began to voice some of their complaints, encouraged others to work toward solutions to problems, etc.

The curriculum for the classes evolved throughout the grant period. While students worked on improving their school skills, they were also developing sophisticated workplace skills, such as note-taking and making presentations.

The students at Neville Manor have a passionate interest in their work and their workplace. In spite of their specific and bitter complaints, most are deeply committed to the work they do and to the clients they serve. They have a high level of insight into all aspects of the nursing home, but they are very cynical about the possibility that their ideas will be heard or acted upon. Our hope is that as students develop the ability to analyze information and to present ideas in a logical and rational manner, they can make concrete contributions and be satisfied that they have done so.

THE CAMBRIDGE HOSPITAL:

When the program began in the summer of 1991, all the participants spoke English as their second or third language, were highly educated in their own countries, and were at a fairly advanced level of skill in English. All were interested in improving their writing, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The curriculum for that group targeted those areas. The class was structured as a grammar review, and a few specific grammar points were introduced/reviewed at each session. We then moved to vocabulary and writing exercises, reinforcing the "grammar of the day" whenever possible. Photographs, hospital materials, articles from newspapers and books, and teacher-written pieces were used, all related to health care.

In September, after a five-week session with these students,

several native speakers of English joined the class. Students discussed what they wanted to learn in class, and the curriculum focus was shifted to reading and writing, with discussion components that allowed for pronunciation work. That this approach worked so well for so long is a testament to the learners' generosity and patience with each other. As more students with skill levels above and below those already enrolled joined the program, it became impossible to accommodate the learners' needs.

Using classroom aides made it possible to design individual curricula and lesson plans for each student. Students worked independently and in groups of two or sometimes three in two separate classrooms. One learner, for example, would work on punctuation using a workbook and teacher-made exercises, while another copied the alphabet, learning about upper and lower case letters. Another student might be doing grammar exercises and writing while still another might be listening to language tapes.

Eventually enough employees enrolled in the program to justify running two English classes at the worksite. An ESL teacher was hired to work with a small group of low-level ESL students and the coordinator taught the larger high-level class, which was comprised of native and non-native speakers of English. The employees in the ABE class came from several departments in the hospital and had very different writing needs on and off the job. Students were asked to describe the kinds of writing they do on and off the job (see appendix 1). Using their answers as a springboard, a discussion was held in class about the kinds of writing with which they had the most difficulty. The class consensus was that skills such as describing and summarizing were the most difficult. Nursing assistants and other patient-care workers use these skills for incident reports and medical histories. At home, students universally found letter-writing necessary and difficult, especially consumer letters of complaint. Existing texts were used to teach letter-writing and curriculum development was devoted to addressing the problems of description and summarizing.

LESSONS FROM NEVILLE MANOR AND THE CAMBRIDGE HOSPITAL:

The lesson plans that follow grew out of the classes at Neville Manor and The Cambridge Hospital. It seemed that the workplace skills the students needed at Neville Manor were those which would help them participate in the TQM process effectively, in order to make a contribution to their changing workplace. At TCH students wanted to improve their writing skills to do a better job at preparing required reports.

Most of the students in the Neville Manor class were nurse assistants. At TCH students came from many different departments. The lessons below could be used in any workplace, health-care or otherwise, with minimal adjustments. The curriculum had similar aims at both sites, although at TCH the ABE class was at a higher level. We have grouped lessons here by their pedagogical goals rather than by workplace site.

These lessons are not meant to be a complete curriculum. We hope they will serve, rather, as examples of lessons which help students enhance understanding of their workplaces as they simultaneously improve their school skills.

LESSON 1: (Neville)

Goal 1: (School skills)
- Writing sentences using imperatives
- Organizing, categorizing ideas
- Sequencing events or activities
- Using parallel structures

Goal 2: (Workplace skills)
- Articulating and defining job tasks
- Pinpointing areas of difficulty

Start work as a class with newsprint sheets. Put name of job at top of sheet. If class members have different jobs, one sheet might be for nursing assistant, one could be housekeeper, one dietary assistant. Under each job title, put two words, dividing the sheet in half thus:

Nursing Assistant

easy	difficult

The class works as a group thinking of parts of their jobs which are easy and difficult. Some things are difficult for one person and easy for another: put these in the middle of the sheet. Someone might say, "Break time is easy." Write it down--it's part of the job. Accept all suggestions, as long as they are job related.

After this is finished, re-read what is on the sheet(s). Most likely, jobs will break down into two types of items--actual tasks vs. encounters or contacts with other people. (e.g., making coffee for 180 people vs. talking to supervisor about the menu, or making beds vs. dealing with family members.)

Students then complete their own worksheets, using items from the board and adding more of their own ideas.

Writing task:

1) Each student chooses an "easy" task from his/her own worksheet and writes instructions. Structures should be parallel and instructions sequential. Do a sample together first, something from daily life like "Brushing your teeth". Write on board. Put in format as follows:

Open toothpaste.
Pick up toothpaste and toothbrush.
Put paste on toothbrush.
Turn on water.
Wet toothbrush.
Turn off water.
etc., etc.

2) Next work on an encounter/contact problem. Again start by doing a sample together; for example, "How to deal with your mother-in-

law". This one is not sequential. It will contain bits of advice. Then each student chooses one of the hard tasks from his/her own list and writes a list of advice. Again structures should be parallel (e.g., all imperatives or all "you should"), but most likely in this instance not sequential.

3) Each student should write two instruction/advice lists. One should be hard; one easy. One should be a task; one an encounter or contact.

QUIZ: Choose one task you perform regularly on your job. Write instructions for a new employee. Assume this person knows nothing about the job.
OR: Write advice for a new employee in your department. List the ten most important items this person needs to know.

LESSON 2: (Neville)

GOAL 1: (School skills)

Writing sentences using imperatives
Organizing, categorizing ideas
Sequencing events or activities
Using parallel structures

GOAL 2: (Workplace skills)

Pinpointing areas of difficulty
Understanding and resolving conflicts
Articulating conflicting points of view

In our class there were several recurring encounter/contact issues which were highly charged emotionally. One such issue revolves around demands made by residents' family members. We worked as a class on a list of suggestions to families. We began working as a group with a list of suggestions, written just as they were stated. The statements were clearly angry statements. The list was long and included explanations of why the problems existed. We then worked as a class to re-write the list in a more moderate form, tempering the anger and shaping constructive suggestions. As we did this, students articulated many background issues related to the problem. As we talked, the different sides of the issue became clear. Students explained what the families thought and what the nurses and supervisors thought as well as what they, the nursing assistants, thought. The final document we wrote together was used in an orientation booklet for families of residents. In gradually achieving the final form of this document, the students worked on many skills, school as well as workplace skills.

The final product was submitted to the administrator of the nursing home, who thanked the class and told them he planned to include their suggestions in a revised orientation booklet for families of residents.

A lesson plan based on the process follows. The shape of this lesson was not planned in advance, but any subject could be treated with the steps that evolved here:

1. State the problem. Free associate reactions, ideas about the problem.
2. Look at the list and pinpoint sources of conflict.
3. State different parties' point of view. Role play.
4. List suggestions for change.
5. Judge suggestions for feasibility.
6. Re-work suggestions into diplomatic language.
7. Work on strategies for implementing suggestions.

LESSON 3: (TCH)

Goal 1: (School Skills)

Paragraphing
Sequencing
Describing events

Goal 2: (Workplace Skills)

Group problem-solving
Organizing material into paragraphs
Describing events in written form

Give Polaroid camera to students and send them out to take pictures inside and outside facility. Tell them to take turns. When they come back, ask them to write a story about what happened. Share stories. Compare approaches. Some students will write a chronology of events. Others will organize in different ways, such as inside/outside. Discuss the various ways to organize material. Give each student a picture and have them write a paragraph about it. Compare paragraphs and have students remove extraneous sentences if necessary. Then each student takes three pictures and write a story or essay, devoting a paragraph to each picture.

LESSON 4: (Neville)

Goal 1: (School skills)

Organizing material into paragraphs
Writing sentences in paragraphs
Writing business letters

Goal 2: (Workplace skills)

Writing business letters
Articulating skills and qualities necessary for one's job.
Working in groups to achieve consensus.

Start work as a class with newsprint sheets, one for each job. Put two words --"qualities" and "skills" on each sheet. Discuss the difference between qualities or characteristics and skills. Have students list what is needed for their job, categorizing each as a quality (e.g., patience) or a skill (e.g., turning a patient in bed). If the class has students from several different jobs, divide up and have each job group finish the lists. Compare the lists afterwards.

Have the class members tell what they know about the format of a business letter. Teach business letter format, or give each group one part of the format and have them teach it to the other groups.

The writing task will be for students to write a letter of recommendation for a fellow employee. The first paragraph will be the introduction. The teacher should explain what might be put into the introduction (the position applied for, how long you have known the person and in what capacity). The second paragraph should be skills and why they are applicable. The third paragraph should be qualities, and the fourth should be a short conclusion. Paragraph one and four could be written as a class, but two and three should be done by each student individually.

LESSON 5: (Neville)

GOAL 1: (School Skills)

Improving vocabulary
Improving writing style
Organizing material into paragraphs
Writing sentences
Using descriptive words

GOAL 2: (Workplace Skills)

Identifying language used to express opinion
Expressing opinion
Changing tone of language: subjective to objective

Divide the class in half. Half think about someone they dislike or disrespect. Half think about someone they like, respect, or admire. Be sure students understand that they must pick a person who is not an employee or resident at the nursing home. It can be somebody famous. Each student makes two lists of descriptive words about the liked or disliked person. One list is qualities or characteristics and the other is actions (what the person does).

Teacher collects lists and reads off words to the class. The students divide them into categories (qualities/characteristics or actions) and into negative or positive or neutral.

Group students by twos or threes. Give each group a list of some of these words. They should change the negatives to positives or neutrals and vice versa. Then they should report back to the group.

Vocabulary and grammar exercise: The class can work together to build work families and lists of related vocabulary (e.g., generous, generosity, would give you the shirt off his back). Students can practice using these words and their word families in sentences. With each sentence, have students work on changing positive innuendo to negative and vice versa.

Writing assignment: Write a description of a person. Again there should be an introductory paragraph, a paragraph for qualities, a paragraph for actions, and a conclusion.

LESSON 6: (TCH)

Goal 1: (School Skills)

Discerning between fact and opinion

Using fact and opinion correctly

Goal 2: (Workplace Skills)

Identifying fact and opinion

Using fact and opinion appropriately

Teacher writes a few fact and opinion statements on the board. Ask students to identify which are fact and which are opinion. Have students suggest a few more. Pass out "Employee-of-the-Month" article from TCH newsletter (see appendix 2). Have students read story aloud. Students underline fact statements and rewrite article using facts only. Some students think anything between quotation marks is opinion--discuss.

LESSON 7: (Neville)

Goal 1: (School Skills)

Using parallel structures

Organizing material

Goal 2: (Workplace skills)

Writing a job description

Analyzing and organizing job tasks

Working in groups to achieve a single

Preparation by the teacher: Get 2 job descriptions from another workplace. Also get copies of job descriptions from this workplace for the jobs represented in the class.

1) Give the class sample job descriptions, preferably with two different formats. Have them work in groups of 2 or 3. Task will be for each group to write the job description for their job. Each group should decide which format to use. The two lists from previous classes --difficult/easy tasks (Lesson 1), and skills/qualities for the job (Lesson 4) will be useful to students.

2) Students compare their work to the official job description of their job. They should rewrite the parts which are inaccurate, both in their version and in the official version. Students work towards a correct version.

3) Discuss the differences between student versions and official versions. Make a plan for submitting suggestions to administration, either about how to change the job to fit the official description or how to change the description to fit the job, or both.

LESSON 8: (Neville)

Goal 1: (School skills)

Taking notes

Presenting report on material learned

Goal 2: (Workplace skills)

Taking notes

Presenting report on material learned

Use an interview from newspaper or book. (e.g., Elsa Auerbach et al., ESL for Action, p. 137). The language in the interview should be at a level easily understood by students. Tell them to take notes. Teacher reads first question and first response while the students take notes. Students then tell the teacher exactly what they wrote on their papers. Teacher writes their notes verbatim on the board. Students discuss which notes give the most complete and the clearest information. Teacher reads the same part again. Students again take notes and again read aloud exactly what they wrote on their papers. Teacher continues to the next response from the interview. After the students get the idea of note taking, one by one they report back what they learned from the interview. They should use their notes to make their reports.

Write interview questions. Have students interview each other or someone else and note answers and report back.

LESSON 9: (TCH)

Goal 1: (School Skills)

Taking notes

Organizing prose into paragraphs

Goal 2: (Workplace Skills)

Taking notes

Writing a report from notes

Read aloud teacher-written essay about planned expansion of Cambridge Hospital that lacks conclusion (see appendix 3). Have students take notes so they can reconstruct essay. After hearing each other's essays, learners discuss how differently they take notes. Some students may feel they write too much too slowly and therefore miss of the end of the essay. Others may not be able to determine what is important to take notes on until they attempt a rewrite. Discuss note-taking techniques at length; then students rewrite their essays while sharing their notes. Collect essays and correct the grammar, spelling and punctuation, and return them.

LESSON 10: (TCH)

Goal 1: (School skills)
- Paragraphing
- Understanding essay form
- Outlining

Goal 2: (Workplace skills)
- Paragraphing
- Organizing ideas

Pass out copies of essay on Cambridge Hospital expansion (see previous lesson) which purposely lacks a conclusion. Write on blackboard:

STANDARD ESSAY FORM

Introductory paragraph, ending with topic sentence

Paragraph
(3 points)

Paragraph
(3 points)

Paragraph
(3 points)

Concluding paragraph, beginning with paraphrased topic sentence

Explain diagram above to class, and suggested we use "Cambridge Hospital Expansion" to illustrate the format. Take information from essay and make outline and write conclusion on the board (elicit from students).

Followup: Take notes on videotaped press conference of hospital administrator. Answer questions about content and write essay on issues presented.

CONCLUSION:

The challenge at The Cambridge Hospital and Neville Manor Nursing Home was to develop a workplace curriculum for our higher level students. Most workplace education materials are geared toward ESL and low level ABE classes. It is easier to develop materials for these levels because the curriculum developer can use forms, handbooks, and notices collected in the workplace. With a high-level ABE class (reading levels 6.0 and above), the workplace provides few "natural" curriculum materials.

Our curriculum, then, focuses on several skill areas that have immediate application in the workplace. We found that reading and writing skills could be paired naturally to the development of workplace related problem-solving and conceptual skills. Students in our classes improved their skills in many areas, including the following:

- --analyzing and articulating complicated tasks, relationships, situations, and conflicts.
- --generalizing problem solving skills from simple to more complex problems.
- --organizing and articulating facts, material, ideas.
- --taking notes and presenting reports on notes taken.
- --writing facts, opinions, and ideas in an organized essay
- --cooperating with others to reach solutions.
- --understanding and manipulating connotations of words and tenor of language.

As is true in most adult education situations, our students improved their self-confidence and self-esteem. We also feel that they are now better equipped to take more responsiblity, to take on new tasks and to be more active members of their workplace.

APPENDIX 1

WHEN DO I WRITE? Name Fred Lee

On the Job:

Summarys of what patient says to me
Counselor Notes:
Writing Notes about patients plans, attitudes behaviors, and feelings. Their understanding of what they are dealing with.

At Home:

Letter Writing

APPENDIX 2

PU[redacted]E

January 1992

The Cambridge Hospital Employee Newsletter

FACT/OPINION

Carol Skaggs is January employee-of-the-month

Carol Skaggs, Cahill 4 Occupational Therapist, clearly contributes to the lives of patients and staff in special ways. Her co-workers describe her as someone who "gives patients who are in emotional crisis a renewed sense of hope by working with their strengths and helping them find ways of adapting to often times unbearable situations. Carol helps patients feel a sense of competence and to resume enjoyment of activities in life."

Carol's co-workers also detailed her style of working, and the contribution she makes to the staff. "Carol is an extremely hard worker, but never calls attention to herself. She is always reassessing her work and trying to improve it. Carol takes her job quite seriously but has a light touch and a great sense of humor that makes her truly a joy to work with. She shows consistently solid judgement, and is a steadying influence for both the managerial staff as well as the patient group."

Another co-worker states, "Carol is the catalyst for turning good ideas into action, and often goes beyond the bounds of her job description for the good of our community. Carol adds warmth, practicality, a cool head in a time of crisis, dedication without complaining, savoir faire, leadership, and dignity to the work atmosphere and quality of patient care on Cahill 4."

Carol's employee-of-the-month surprise happened during a team meeting with many of her co-workers present for the fun. Carol said," I was very flattered and touched by being recognized in this way—I was really overwhelmed with joy. The staff is like family. They are dedicated, supportive and make an extra effort for each other. It was so special being recognized—I will never forget it."

Carol Skaggs (center), Occupational Therapist on Cahill 4, was recently named January employee-of-the-month. She is being congratulated by staff and friends.

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APPENDIX 3

Cambridge Hospital Expansion

When The Cambridge Hospital opened its doors in 1918, it was a 50-bed general community hospital. It has evolved into an integrated health-care system that includes a 169-bed inpatient facility and six neighborhood health centers. Over the past decade, the hospital has undertaken numerous renovation projects to expand existing services and provide new ones. But the hospital's activity will soon outstrip its physical capacity to provide services. To meet future needs, The Cambridge Hospital has developed an ambitious plan to update its facilities.

The hospital will construct a new six-story building with three underground parking levels. The new building will be located next to the main building. Two additional levels will be added to the three-story section of the main building. The project will add 70,000 square feet to TCH's current capacity.

The new building has been designed to house ambulatory services (including the primary care center, ambulatory pediatrics, the women's center and the Zinberg clinic) and specialty services such as orthopedics, podiatry and surgery. These facilities are now located in different buildings all over the hospital campus. Locating the services together in a single building will be more convenient for patients.

Some aspects of the plan have already been completed: administrative services have been moved off-site; the Teen and North Cambridge Health Centers have been constructed; and renovations to the Windsor Street Health Center have been completed. Other parts of the plan are currently underway: construction of a new Riverside Health Center on Western Avenue will be completed by 1992; construction has begun on a new senior health center in mid-Cambridge.

Needs concluding paragraph.